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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Prepared by
Food Safety
and Inspection
Service

Food News for Consumers

May 1982

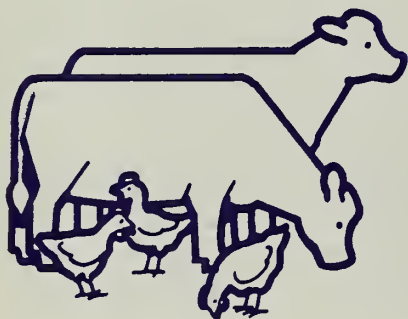
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USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service:

- Inspects and analyzes domestic and imported meat, poultry, and meat and poultry food products;
- Establishes standards and approves recipes and labels for processed meat and poultry products; and
- Monitors the meat and poultry industries for violations of inspection laws.

Volume of Federally Inspected Meat and Poultry Increasing



The volume of meat and poultry products inspected by FSIS has steadily increased in recent years, according to the agency's 1981 report to Congress. Since 1975, red meat slaughter has remained relatively stable, poultry slaughter has steadily risen and the amount of processed meat and poultry products inspected has increased 50 percent.

In response to the increasing workload along with other developments in meat and poultry production, FSIS has been engaged in an ongoing effort to improve inspection. New inspection methods--some already in place and others still being developed--increase inspector productivity and meet the needs of a modernized industry while continuing to provide a high level of consumer protection.

In 1981, 8,343 inspectors in 7,155 federal plants inspected nearly 130 million head of livestock, 4.4 billion birds, and approximately 106 billion pounds of processed meat and poultry products. Agency scientists analyzed more than 200,000 meat and poultry samples. And, as part of the prior approval process, FSIS officials reviewed 118,540 product labeling applications, 2,488 blueprints of plants, and 1,684 drawings of plant equipment.

Also in 1981, 1.9 billion pounds of fresh and processed meat were exported to the United States. Of this amount, 11 million pounds were refused entry because they were found to be unacceptable during import inspection. During the year, FSIS inspection officers conducted over 2,257 reviews of foreign plants approved to export to this country.

Strengthened Controls on Imported Meat

In August 1981, an incident involving the importation of mislabeled and adulterated meat from Australia resulted in FSIS detaining and sampling nearly 66 million pounds of boneless beef from that country. Shipments labeled as beef were found to contain horse meat and kangaroo meat.

Imported Meat continued

With the aid of the Australian Government, FSIS traced the problem to a meat substitution scandal in the State of Victoria, operating outside the controls of Australia's Federal inspection system. All shipments from Victoria were stopped, while other Australian product was subjected to intensified inspection. FSIS then began sampling the Victoria product on a lot-by-lot basis, and as tests confirmed the species as beef, the meat was allowed to enter U.S. commercial channels.

By November 1981, the Australian Government had fully implemented a U.S.-approved program to strengthen controls over the movement, inventory, and storage of export product, including a pre-export species testing program. In November, FSIS notified all other countries that export meat to the United States to submit information on controls in their systems to prevent the substitution of illegal meat. Countries were also required to submit plans for pre-export species testing programs to supplement and verify the effectiveness of their controls. The Agency is using this information to conduct extensive reviews of the systems.

Meat and Poultry Advisory Committee Named



In October, USDA named 17 members to the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection. This committee counsels USDA on matters related to the meat and poultry inspection program; and its members represent scientific and public health organizations, federal and state government agencies, academic circles, and various private interest and trade groups.

The committee is USDA's link with outside groups and represents a national geographic distribution, as well as a divergence of backgrounds and expertise. The agenda for the rechartered committee's first meeting on November 12 and 13 included food safety, sodium labeling of meat and poultry products, and legislative issues. Press Release #1342-81 (10-14-81).

New Approach to Prevent Drug Residues in Meat and Poultry

USDA recently began working with meat and poultry producers to develop a new approach to the problem of drug and other chemical residues in animals. The Total Residue Avoidance Program--TRAP--aims to reduce the levels of chemical residues by making prevention a part of all stages of animal production.

Each year a significant amount of meat and poultry cannot be marketed because the animals contain excessive levels of drugs or other chemicals. Producers use drugs to treat or prevent disease and to promote growth. Other residues might stem from accidental exposure to chemicals used on farms, such as pesticides.

How to Obtain Free Copies

Single free copies of press releases, Federal Register reprints, studies, fact sheets, and publications mentioned in the FSIS section of this newsletter are available from FSIS Public Awareness, Room 1163-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Phone: (202) 447-9351.

Where to Send Comments

Send your comments on proposals in the FSIS section to: Regulations Coordination Division, Room 2637-S, FSIS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Usually two copies are requested. Be sure to identify the proposal you are commenting on by referring to the title of informal proposals or, for formal proposals, the date of publication in the Federal Register.

Drug Residues continued

An essential part of the TRAP program is an education campaign directed at farmers to make them aware of the residue problem and how they can prevent it. The campaign is a combined effort by national producer organizations and federal, state and local governments.

Testing for Antibiotic Residues at the Slaughterhouse



In another move to address residue problems, USDA proposed in March expanding the use of a rapid test in slaughterhouses to detect antibiotic residues in veal calves, beef cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. The test has been used on slaughtered dairy cattle since 1979.

By using STOP--the Swab Test On the Premises--federal inspectors at the slaughterhouse can tell within 18 hours whether carcasses have traces of antibiotics. If the test shows no antibiotics, the carcass moves into commerce without delay.

Traditional laboratory testing, which is still used to confirm a positive finding with the STOP, takes one to two weeks to get results back to the inspectors.

Since the program began three years ago, inspectors have been able to screen at reduced cost 10 times as many cattle as they could when only conventional laboratory tests were available.

To perform the swab test, inspectors insert ordinary cotton swabs into the liver, kidney or muscle tissue of the slaughtered animal. The swabs are then put on a plate containing a nutritive gel streaked with harmless bacteria. After 18 hours in an incubator, any traces of antibiotics from the animal will inhibit bacterial growth around the swab tip and give a "positive" result.

In such cases, the inspector holds the carcass at the plant and sends samples to the laboratory for additional testing. If antibiotics are confirmed at levels above the legal tolerance, the carcass cannot be used as food.

Salmonella Sampling Program Begins

Last January USDA began a salmonella sampling program for roast and corned beef in response to recent outbreaks of salmonellosis in the Northeastern states. Salmonellosis is a foodborne illness that can be prevented through proper food preparation and handling. Its symptoms include headache, diarrhea, abdominal discomfort and sometimes vomiting.

The program focuses on checking samples of cooked roast and corned beef, and so far has resulted in three recalls. During this 12-month program, federal meat inspectors will take samples at 258 plants nationwide, but will concentrate on 104 plants in the Northeast.

To prevent future problems, USDA has developed special training materials on sanitation and handling practices for USDA inspectors so they can help plant managers correct problems. The department also has underway an education effort, directed at plant operators, that stresses the importance of plant sanitation, and is developing educational material for food handlers working in delicatessens, cafeterias, restaurants and similar retail outlets.

USDA Develops New Tests to Detect Residues

On March 24 FSIS began using two highly dependable tests to analyze meat and poultry for sulfa drug residues. Developed by FSIS scientists, the tests are more precise than the former official test and can detect and measure drug residues at 0.1 parts per million. The department conducts residue testing of meat and poultry both for drugs used in animal production and for industrial and agricultural chemicals as part of its inspection of meat and poultry.

USDA scientists also recently developed tests to check for residues of two other chemicals--pentachlorophenol (PCP) and chloramphenicol. PCP is a wood preservative that can cause liver damage and possibly sterility in humans. It is commonly used in wood used for animal pens and in wood chips used for animal bedding. Chloramphenicol, an antibiotic that has been banned from use in animals raised for food, can cause aplastic anemia in humans.

Nitrite in Cured Meat

In December, in the first of two reports on nitrites, the National Academy of Sciences noted that although nitrite in cured meats accounts for only a small proportion of exposure to cancer-causing nitrosamines, its levels should be reduced to "the extent that protection against botulism is not compromised."

The report, done under contract from FSIS and the Food and Drug Administration, also included recommendations concerning nitrate (which converts to nitrite in meat) saying that it should be eliminated from cures for meat and poultry except for fermented sausages and dry cured meats.

Also, the Committee recommended that research be done to find ways of reducing nitrate content of fertilizers, vegetables, tobacco, and drinking water, noting that its presence in these products contributes to exposure to nitrosamines. (Nitrosamines can form when nitrate or nitrite combines with other naturally-occurring compounds.)

A second NAS study, a review of research on nitrite alternatives, was released April 30, 1982.

Second Annual Food Safety Poster Contest



In January USDA announced its second annual food safety poster contest. Elementary school children across the country were asked to dream up the perfect picture to show how to pack a bag or box lunch to prevent food poisoning. More than 2 million cases of food poisoning occur every year.

This year's theme is designed to teach children how to prevent food poisoning that can result from improperly prepared and packaged bag and box lunches. Entries will be judged on the quality of the illustration, originality, neatness and accuracy of food safety information.

USDA received over 45,000 entries last year. This year's competition closed March 14 and winners, who will receive U.S. Savings Bonds, will be announced later this spring.

Printing Schedule for Food News for Consumers

Many readers of "Food News for Consumers" have asked recently about our publication schedule, thinking that they may have missed an issue since the last one in August 1981. "Food News for Consumers" is printed on an irregular basis and its publication is timed to coincide with items of interest occurring within USDA. In 1982 we're aiming to print three issues.

Summertime Food Safety

The warm summer climate creates the perfect conditions for food poisoning organisms to grow, and contributes tremendously to the 2 million cases of food poisoning that occur every year in the United States.

According to USDA's publication, "Summertime Food Safety," there are three simple ways to eliminate food poisoning:

--Keep hot food hot. Once food is cooked, keep it hot (above 140° F) until served, and refrigerate leftovers immediately.

--Keep cold food cold. Refrigerate perishable foods promptly. Keep refrigerator temperature at 35° to 40° F (2° to 4° C).

--Keep food clean. Avoid unsanitary practices that contaminate food.

In addition, the publication points out that using disposable plates and utensils for summertime outings helps avoid cross-contamination between cooked and uncooked food. To assure that cross-contamination does not occur, all utensils and platters should be washed with soap and hot water after they have been used to hold raw meat and before they are used to serve cooked food.

Free copies of "Summertime Food Safety" are available by writing: USDA, FSIS, Room 1163-S, Washington, D.C. 20250. Other available publications on Food Safety include: "Food Safety for the Family," "Safe Brown Bag Lunches," and "Holiday Food Safety."

FSIS Withdraws from Regional Offices

Budget cuts have forced the FSIS to withdraw from the regional information system that serves several agencies within the Department. Beginning April 1, the FSIS Information Staff in Washington will respond to requests that in the past might have gone instead to Regional Information Offices. (For more on the Regional Offices, see "AMS Closes Two Regional Offices," page 15.)

Here are the FSIS offices in Washington and the areas they handle:

| | |
|---|---|
| .Consumer inquiries | FSIS Consumer Inquiries USDA Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 472-4485 |
| .Press inquiries | USDA-FSIS Information Room 1160-S Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 447-9113 |
| .Publications requests .Invitations to attend or exhibit at conferences | USDA-FSIS Public Awareness Room 1163-S Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 447-9351 |

Enforcement Actions

corned beef recall

The following are some recent actions taken by FSIS to protect the nation's food supply.

Best Provision, Inc., a Newark, N.J. meat processor, recalled an estimated 57,000 pounds of cooked corned beef in March after USDA tests confirmed the presence of salmonella. The corned beef--marketed under the "Best's" brand name--was distributed to delicatessens and similar outlets in Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Wisconsin. No other products produced by the firm were affected by the recall. The corn beef is sold by delicatessens as opposed to prepackaged and labeled product found in supermarket meat cases. No illnesses were reported. The firm cooperated fully in recalling the product from the marketplace and notified its distributors to return the suspect product to Best as a precautionary measure. Press Release #307-82 (3-17-82).

**Enforcement Actions
continued**

**sliced turkey
bologna recall**

In February 1982 USDA urged consumers in Alabama, Indiana, Michigan and Tennessee to return certain packages of sliced turkey bologna to retail stores where they were bought. The product, sold in 1-pound packages under the "Mr. Turkey" trade name, possibly contained metal fragments. The distributor of "Mr. Turkey," Bil-Mar Foods, Inc., Zeeland, Michigan, voluntarily recalled the product following a consumer complaint and subsequent sampling by USDA. Press Release (2-26-82).

corned beef recall

Later in February Mosey's Corned Beef Inc., Bloomfield, Conn., voluntarily recalled cooked corned beef after USDA tests confirmed the presence of salmonella, a food poisoning organism. USDA discovered the salmonella during its salmonella sampling program. USDA initiated the precautionary recall because some 130,000 pounds of potentially contaminated product had been distributed to delicatessens and similar retail outlets in 19 states and Washington, D.C. Press Release #124-82 (2-3-82).

**chicken broth
warning**

In November 1981 USDA advised consumers not to eat chicken broth from 13-1/2 oz. cans produced by Sweet Sue Kitchens, Inc., Athens, Ala.. The production code 1B084 and the plant code P-732 appear on the label. Laboratory tests indicated some of the product might have contained *C. botulinum* Type A, which produces a deadly toxin. Consumers were asked to return the product to the store where it was bought. No illnesses were reported. Press Release #1524 (11-20-82).

**meatball product
recall**

Also in November, consumers in eight states were advised to return 15-oz. cans of macaroni and meatball product with the code number 1091A/LS/EST-1401. A consumer in Illinois found metal fragments in a can of "Chef Boy-Ar-Dee Rollercoaster Wavy Macaroni with Meatballs" produced by American Home Foods. As a precautionary measure, the firm voluntarily recalled the product from retail outlets in Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas. Press Release #1522-81 (11-20-81).

roast beef recall

USDA initiated a voluntary recall on roast beef in seven Northeastern states last October. The department acted when a number of people became ill after eating the product in Oswego, N.Y., and St. Albans, Vt. The product, produced by State National Provision, Inc., Albany, N.Y., is sold to retailers and wholesalers under the Orlev and State National brand names. The product is sliced to order in delicatessens and cafeterias. Distributors, wholesalers and retailers were notified to return the product to the plant. Press Release #1360-81 (10-15-81) and #1376-81 (10-20-81).



If you have a question or a problem with the safety or wholesomeness of a meat or poultry product, or the truthfulness of its labeling, contact FSIS Consumer Inquiries, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call (202) 472-4485.

**What's New from
FSIS**

"Sodium--Think about It..." is the title of a new consumer publication that is expected to be available in May. To be issued jointly by the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration, the brochure explains sodium's relationship to health, gives sources of sodium in food and suggests how consumers can reduce their sodium intake.

What's New
continued



Single free copies can be ordered from the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colorado, 81009. For bulk copies, write the USDA-FSIS Publications Office, Rm. 1163-S, Washington, D.C. 20250. That office can also provide negatives to organizations that want to print and distribute their own copies.

Other FSIS News

Block announces steps to prevent import of adulterated meat. Press Release #1085-81 (8-25-81).

USDA changes swine inspection procedures so fewer inspectors can do more. Press Release #1104-81 (8-27-81).

Rhode Island and Michigan ask USDA to assume meat and poultry inspection. Press Release #1119-81 (9-1-81).

USDA releases most impounded Australian meat. Press Release #1152-81 (9-4-81).

USDA clarifies retail exemption procedures. Press Release #1218-81 (9-18-81).

USDA to increase rates for meat and poultry inspection Oct. 4. Press Release #1205-81 (9-17-81).

USDA approves new agents for use in processing meat and poultry. Press Release #1296-81 (10-2-81).

USDA names meat and poultry inspection advisory committee. Press Release #1342-81 (10-14-81).

Engineers develop experimental grading instrument. Press Release #1359-81 (10-16-81).

USDA announces 2nd annual food safety contest. Press Release #1518-81 (11-20-81).

USDA proposes change in margarine standard. Comment period ended 3-29-82. Press Release #85-82 (1-27-82).

USDA raises rates for meat and poultry inspection. Press Release #84-82 (1-27-82).

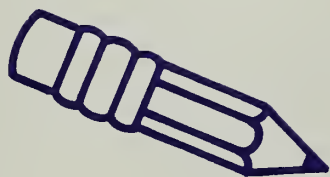
USDA to begin using new tests to detect sulfa residues. Press Release #188-82 (2-19-82).

USDA approves fumaric acid use in processed meats. Press Release #189-82 (2-19-82).

USDA proposes expanding testing at the slaughterhouse to speed inspection. Comment period ends May 12. Press Release #282-82 (3-12-82).

USDA expands use of phosphates by meat and poultry processors. Press Release #290-82 (3-12-82).

USDA raises retail sales exemption for meat and poultry. Press Release #332-82 (3-22-82).

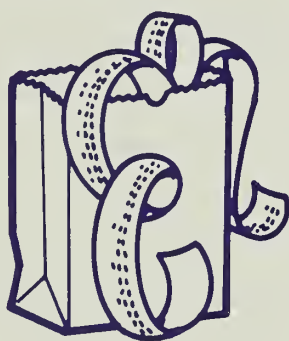


Economic Research Service

USDA's Economic Research Service:

- Analyzes international activities of agricultural significance;
- Does research on commodities, food and nutrition, natural resources, and rural development; and
- Furnishes timely and objective economic and statistical information to farmers, other rural Americans, industries, consumers, and policy-makers.

Income Spent on Groceries Declines



Americans spend a much smaller portion of their income on groceries, clothing and tobacco than they did in 1960. But they spend more on medical care, housing and gas and oil.

The percentage of disposable personal income spent on groceries declined to 12.2 percent in 1980, down from 16 percent in 1960. Meanwhile, the percentage of income spent on food away from home increased from 4 percent to only 4.4 percent for that period.

After food, the sharpest drop in spending came from clothing and shoes, which fell from 7.5 percent in 1960 to 6 percent in 1980. Money spent on tobacco dropped from 2 percent to 1 percent. The income share for alcoholic beverages decreased from 1.8 percent to 1.5 percent.

However, the share of income spent on medical care jumped from 4.4 percent to 7.9 percent in the last 20 years. Housing costs increased from 13.7 percent to 14.9 percent. Oil and gas accounted for 4.9 percent of personal income in 1980 compared to 3.4 percent in 1960.

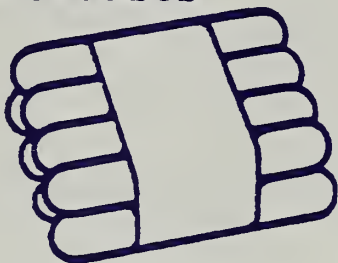
Organic Food May Not be "All" Natural

Organic food just might contain some chemicals not intended by Mother Nature. In 1978 researchers at Wayne State and Michigan State Universities bought 10 brands of bread--five from health food stores and five from supermarkets. All 10 samples contained traces of pesticide residue.

In 1979 USDA and the Department of Interior found that five of six heads of organic lettuce bought at six health food stores contained pesticide residues. In fact, the level of pesticide residue in one of the heads exceeded that of nonorganic lettuce purchased at supermarkets. The residue levels for both the bread and lettuce, however, were within the limits allowed by federal agencies.

USDA defines "organic food" as food free from synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and chemical additives. While most organic foods probably are free from "unnatural" chemicals, some may contain pesticide residues because traces of pesticide remain in the soil years after applications have stopped. Such residues also may come from nearby farms in dust, wind and rainfall runoff.

Consumer Taste for Poultry Frankfurters Increases



Until recent years consumers usually bought only two types of frankfurters--those made with beef or those made with a combination of pork and other red meats. But in the 1970s food producers introduced poultry franks. These frankfurters, made from minced turkey and chicken, seem to have caught on in the retail market.

In fact, poultry franks captured 10.1 percent of the frankfurter market in 1980, up from 5.2 percent in 1978. They gained at the expense of beef frankfurters, whose share declined from 38.8 to 28.9 percent. The market share of franks made from pork and other red meats increased from 55.9 to 61 percent.

Some Store Owners Defend Repricing

In recent years, controversy has arisen between store owners and consumers over the practice of repricing--stamping one price on top of another. Most supermarket owners defend repricing, saying that cost factors force them to reprice sales items back to the presale level and to raise prices as soon as they have to pay more for an item.

Opponents of repricing suggest that grocers allow all packages of a product to sell out before re-stocking at a higher price. But the store owners contend that if repricing were not allowed, they would be forced to display different prices on different packages of a product simultaneously. The result would be an unattractive store appearance from consumers looking through displays for lower-priced merchandise. And clerks would have to continually fix displays, a chore that adds to costs.

Store operators say also that checkout clerks would make more mistakes because they assume all packages of a product have the same price. Another problem, they argue, is that many products need re-stocking at the same time. As a result, they would have to abandon the labor efficient practice of re-stocking an entire aisle at one time and stacking products on carts or pallets in the same sequence that they appear on the shelf.

Supermarket Scanners Meet Some Resistance

Item pricing--labeling prices on each supermarket item--is slowly losing ground to code symbols that can be read by electric scanners. Today, more than a fifth of the Nation's supermarkets use scanner systems. While the new machines can significantly reduce costs to the retailers and provide marketing advantages, supermarkets are encountering some apprehension among consumers. The use of code symbols eliminates the primary source of price information for most shoppers.

Stores that discontinue marking individual items when scanners are installed rely instead on shelf tags to inform customers of prices. They also are making a special effort to ensure price information on shelf tags and on cash register tapes is identical and easy to read.

Despite some continuing consumer resistance, many chains are finding more than enough economic incentive to install electric scanner systems. Industry and USDA studies estimate that dollar savings from eliminating price marking range from 0.2 percent to 0.5 percent of store sales.

Deposit Laws for Beverage Containers



Litter has long been a nationwide problem. So much so, in fact, that during the last decade, 41 States have considered legislation to reduce one kind of litter--discarded beverage containers. But only eight States actually enacted laws requiring deposits on one-way and refillable beverage containers.

States with deposit laws have found that beverage container litter has been sharply reduced. But, food retailers, bottlers, brewers and container manufacturers fear the deposit laws will increase their operating costs, leading to higher prices and reduced sales.

A bill has been introduced in the U.S. Senate to make beverage container deposits and recycling mandatory throughout the Nation. Neither the Senate nor House has taken any action yet on the measure.

Agricultural Research Service

USDA's Agricultural Research Service:

- Conducts research to fulfill the diverse needs of agricultural users--from farmers to consumers--in the areas of:
- Crop and animal production, protection, processing, and distribution;
- Food safety and quality;
- Natural resources conservation.

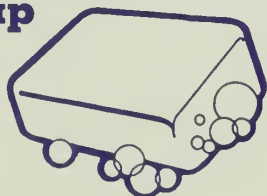
New Process Keeps Blueberries Fresh

Blueberries may one day appear in the produce section of the supermarket all year if fruit processors decide a new "explosion drying" technique is practical and profitable. With this technique, processors heat the berries in a high pressure dryer, where they explode and expell the fruits' water. This leaves a porous, slightly crunchy berry that can be eaten as a snack food. If boiling water is added to the berries, they're restored to a form surprisingly close to fresh blueberries.

USDA scientists say that "explosion drying" is the best way to store and ship commercial blueberries. This fruit is very perishable and freezing it has not proven successful. Frozen blueberries last only about 6 months. Fresh blueberries now are available only for 6 weeks at harvest time.

Explosion-dried berries also are cheaper to produce and of higher quality than either canned or frozen blueberries. They can be stored for over a year and still retain their quality.

Beef Fat Used to Produce Soap



The Fats and Protein Research Foundation has concluded that biodegradable soaps and detergents made from beef fat can be commercially produced in the United States. The tallow-based soaps and detergents clean as well as or better than petroleum-based products. They're also free of phosphates--common pollutants--and break down into biodegradable components between the household drain and the sewage treatment plant.

Beef Fat Soap
continued

Five years ago USDA scientists developed the process that turns beef tallow into household soaps. But American companies never used it for commercial production, even though the cost of the new cleansers was competitive with the synthetics. The Japanese, however, have been quick to produce and sell the natural soaps.

USDA Sees New Uses for Okra



Okra remains a greatly underused food source in the American diet, according to USDA scientists who are studying new ways to use this vegetable. Never very popular in this country, okra is usually served here as a boiled or fried vegetable dish or stewed with tomatoes. But in other countries it serves as a varied and important food.

In Malaysia, for example, okra seeds are dried and ground into coffee. In West Africa the plant's leaves are an important source of calcium, iron and Vitamins A and C. In other parts of the world it's used as a spinach, a high protein oil meal and an edible fat.

USDA scientists say okra seeds also can be ground into a vegetable curd similar to tofu. In addition, the gelatin-like substance found in immature okra can be used as an extender for egg whites and even for blood plasma.

Food and Nutrition Service

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service:

- The food stamp program;
- The national school lunch and school breakfast programs;
- The special supplemental food program for women, infants, and children (WIC); and
- The food distribution, child care food, summer food service, special milk, and food service equipment assistance programs.

Food and Nutrition Magazine

The latest issue of Food and Nutrition magazine focuses on efforts to control fraud and waste in the Food Stamp Program. Articles look at ways Federal, State and local administrators are working to improve their programs and develop better monitoring techniques, often with the help of sophisticated computer technology.

Also in the February issue is an article on one State's efforts to work more closely with grocers who accept food coupons from participants in the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). Using a new computerized system to monitor WIC sales, California has been able to save and extend WIC benefits to additional women, infants and children in need of supplemental food aid.

Paid subscriptions for Food and Nutrition Magazine are available from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Yearly subscription is \$7.50.

Surplus Cheese

Since last December USDA has made available 100 million pounds of surplus cheese to needy people. The department gave the free cheese to the states who made it available to charitable, nonprofit organizations for distribution in 3-pound blocks to eligible people.

Photo ID Cards for Food Stamp Recipients

Food stamp recipients in large urban areas soon will be required to show a photo identification card when they pick up their food stamps. USDA issued this new rule as part of a crackdown on fraud and abuse in the Food Stamp Program. Seventeen metropolitan areas that have more than 100,000 food stamp recipients each are scheduled to begin the photo identification system November 1.

Agricultural Marketing Service



USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service:

- Gathers and disseminates current information on prices, supplies, and other market data;
- Provides cotton and tobacco standardization, inspection, grading, and testing services on request;
- Administers several regulatory programs designed to protect producers, handlers, and consumers from careless, deceptive, or fraudulent marketing practices;
- Administers marketing agreement and order programs to help establish and maintain the orderly marketing of milk, fruits, and vegetables;
- Provides patent protection to developers of certain novel plant varieties;
- Monitors industry-sponsored and -financed research and promotion programs;
- Inspects and analyzes liquid, dried, and frozen egg products;
- Establishes grade standards for fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products, and provides grading services for these foods on request; and
- Buys food for the USDA school lunch program and other food assistance programs.

USDA Issues Marketing Order Guidelines

USDA recently issued guidelines that will influence future government decisions and industry actions concerning federal marketing orders for fruits, vegetables and specialty crops. The department developed the guidelines to help maximize producer returns, reduce federal regulation and support the concept of self-help.

Marketing orders are designed jointly by USDA and producers to help overcome specific marketing problems. Marketing orders may regulate the quality and sizes of the commodity marketed, the quantity, or both. Unlike many government regulations imposed on industries, the orders are put into effect or eliminated only after a referendum of producers.

USDA Issues Guidelines continued

Quality provisions, usually in the form of minimum grade or size requirements, are the most frequently used feature of marketing orders. These provisions keep lower quality produce off the market. However, under the guidelines, they are not to be used as a form of supply control. Since some consumers are less concerned about grades and sizes, USDA has asked industries to consider selling limited quantities of off-grade or off-size produce within local production areas.

The guidelines also will require adjustments in the programs that limit supply or perpetuate over-supply. Guidelines will be applied to each marketing order on a case-by-case basis and with full participation of the industries involved.

Copies of the guidelines and a USDA fact sheet on fruit and vegetable marketing orders can be obtained from: Information Division, AMS, Room 2638-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Ask for "Marketing Order Guidelines" and "Facts About: Federal Marketing Orders for Fruits and Vegetables--In Brief," AMS-596.

No Change Made in Food Grade Terms

After carefully reviewing proposals to make food grade terminology more uniform, AMS officials have decided that any change in the current system would not be beneficial at this time. The current grade nomenclature--which designates quality levels for meat, fruits, vegetables, eggs, dairy and other food products--has been used since the early 1900's. Any change would have involved altering the labels of some commodities and reeducating consumers. USDA determined that the benefits to be derived from any of the possible changes would not offset associated costs, disruptions and inconveniences.

A notice of USDA's decision appeared in the January 22 Federal Register. The department's option paper, on which this decision is based, is available by writing: Uniform Grade Nomenclature, November 1981, Poultry Division, Rm. 3932-S, AMS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

USDA Proposes Changes for Beef Grade Standards



USDA has proposed revisions in the official U.S. Standards for Grades of Carcass Beef and related grades for Slaughter Cattle that would allow leaner beef to qualify for USDA Prime, Choice and Good grades.

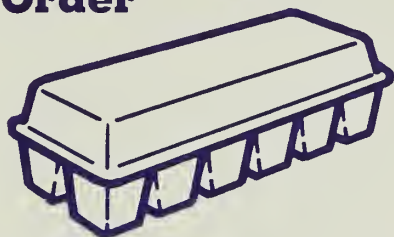
If approved, beef in the Good grade would be leaner with lower palatability. Beef in the Prime and Choice grades also would be leaner but the palatability would not be significantly lowered.

Five public hearing sessions were held in February to collect testimony on the proposal. A comment period, recently closed, was open for three months.

About 100 persons gave their views in formal statements at hearings and about 1,600, as of mid-March, had mailed in comments. General reaction ranges from acceptance with reservations or recommendation for change to complete opposition. Some witnesses suggested alternative proposals ranging from a call for a new grade to identify leaner beef to a return to standards in effect before 1976.

USDA is now evaluating the testimony and comments. Possible decisions include adopting the proposal as originally published, adopting the proposal in part, amending the proposal or not adopting the proposal.

USDA Reviews Proposal to Amend Egg Order



AMS is reviewing written comments and briefs based on three March hearings on proposed amendments to the Egg Research and Promotion Order. At issue is whether to add two consumer representatives to the 18-member American Egg Board and to increase assessments charged to all nonexempt commercial egg producers from 5 cents to 7-1/2 cents per 30-dozen case, with subsequent yearly increases of 3/4 cent to a maximum of 10 cents.

An Egg Industry Promotion Study Task Force submitted the proposed amendments and requested a hearing. If USDA's decides that the proposed amendments are justified, egg producers will be given the opportunity to vote on them. If passed, they would implement 1980 amendments to the Egg Research and Consumer Information Act.

AMS Closes Two Information Offices

Offices providing information services for AMS in the Southwest and Northeast closed on March 31. The offices were located in Dallas and New York. The closings were necessary due to agency reorganization and budget restrictions.

AMS information for states involved in the closings will be handled by AMS' remaining three regional offices in San Francisco, Atlanta and Chicago.

Beginning April 1 AMS' Southern Regional Office in Atlanta will handle work in states previously covered by the Dallas office--Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Louisiana. The Southern Regional Office also will handle work covered by the New York office in Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia.

The Northern Regional Office will serve states previously covered by New York--Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey--and Kansas previously serviced from Dallas.

Colorado and New Mexico, also covered by Dallas, will be served from AMS' Western Regional Office in San Francisco.

Office addresses are: Southern: 1718 Peachtree St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, telephone 404-881-5154; Northern: 536 S. Clark St., Chicago, Ill. 60605, telephone: 312-353-3631; Western: 630 Sansome St., San Francisco, Calif., 94111, telephone: 415-556-6464.

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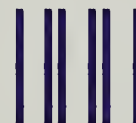
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